

SYSTROPHE
THE BACKGROUND OF
HERBERT'S SONNET **PRAYER**

Thesis
presented to the Faculty of Arts
of the University of Zurich
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

HEINRICH SALOMON HEGNAUER

of Elgg (Zurich)

Accepted on the Recommendation of
Professor Brian W. Vickers Ph. D.



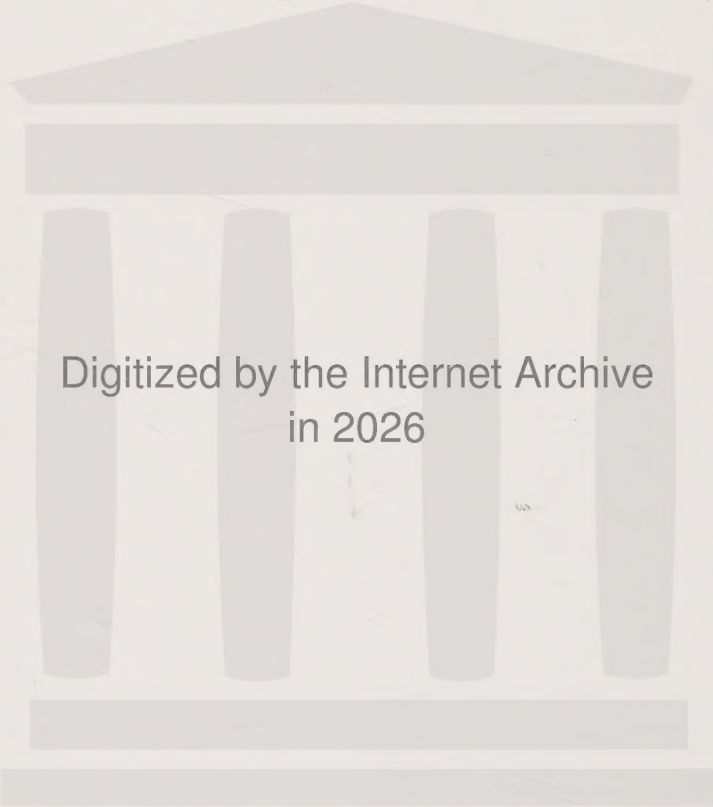
PETER LANG

Berne · Francfort/M. · Las Vegas

1981

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Systrophe: The Background of Herbert's Sonnet **Prayer**



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I. COLLECTION OF MATERIAL

Although first spotted by me in metaphysical poetry, systrophe is by no means confined to this literary period or genre as other examples from Homer, Cicero, Seneca, Shakespeare, Musset, Rilke, Borchardt, et al. show. The following collection of conglobations, however incomplete and inconclusive, moves the metaphysical systrophe into a wider perspective and gives it a tradition, a literary genealogy, as it were. My objective being the function of systrophe in metaphysical poetry I shall discuss its working in detail in the second and main part of this thesis, the part called Deduction. In this first inductive part I shall use the additional references merely as an illustration of certain systrophic characteristics, but do not intend to discuss every single instance. I must therefore ask the reader to bear with me for a while, if I seem to indulge in - what Leech has called - "the 'train-spotting' or 'butterfly-collecting' attitude." Pointing out and naming the parts prepares the stage and the material for an extensive interpretation of systrophe at work in some major metaphysical poems.

I noted the phenomenon first in religious metaphysical poetry of Herbert, Vaughan, and Crashaw. In The Temple the following poems are partly or - as in the case of Prayer I - completely systrophic: Prayer I, Frailtie (st. 1), Sunday (st. 1), To all Angels and Saints (st. 3), Miserie (st. 12 & 13), Dotage (st. 1 & 2); to a certain extent Sinne I and The Quidditie. Herbert's most conspicuous and persevering Latin systrophe is his sequence of twenty-six analogical adjuncts In Honorem Illust. D.D. Verulamij, Stⁱ Albani, Mag. Sigilli Custodies post editam ab eo Instaurationem Magnam. - In the Silex Scintillans of Vaughan numerous examples of systrophe can be found: The Incarnation and Passion (ll. 10ff.), The Morning-watch (ll. 18-22), H. Scriptures (ll. 1-8), Son-dayes, The Proffer (ll. 25ff.), Joy (ll. 3-6), The Garland (ll. 17-20), The Rainbow (ll. 13f.), Fair and yong light! (ll. 11-14), The Night (st. 5 & 6), Quickness (ll. 1-8). In Vaughan's Thalia Rediviva the apostrophe To his Books (ll. 1-6) and To Christian Religion (ll. 1-6) are written in a systrophic mode. - The Carmen Deo Nostro of Crashaw contains the following examples: Nativity Hymn (ll. 79-84), Epiphany Hymn (ll. 22-27), Lauda Sion Salvatorem (st. 12), In the Glorious Assumption of Our Blessed Lady (ll. 64-67), The Weeper (st. 1 & 19), Hope (passim). There can be added two further instances from the Steps to the Temple: Easter day (ll. 4ff.) and Sospetto d'Herode (st. 2).

Peacham illustrates his definition of the term conglobatio with an example from

Cicero's De Oratore II.ix.36. - The article of Greenwood, which inspired this study, (1) lists the following passages (among others): The Homeric Hymn to Ares; Klytaimnestra's speech of welcome in Ayschylos' Agamemnon, 11. 895-902/3; the incantation to Sleep in Seneca's Hercules furens, 11. 1065-1076; the apostrophes of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin in the medieval Latin hymns Veni creator Spiritus and Ave maris stella, respectively; to which I should add certain passages from the Gloria, the Credo, and the Salve Regina; St. Bernard's prayer to the Virgin in Dante's Paradiso, xxxiii, 11. 1-21; Sidney's sonnets on sleep and on a "sweet kiss" in Astrophil and Stella, no. 39 and 79; to which I should add the apostrophes on Morpheus in sonnet 32, on Stella in sonnet 68, on "Sweet swelling lip" in sonnet 80, and the definition of Jealousy in sonnet 78; Shakespeare's variations on night in The Rape of Lucrece, 11. 764-770, on "Misshapen Time", *ibid.* 11. 925-929, and on sleep in Macbeth II.ii. 36-40.

Martz notes a precedent for "the technique of packed analogy used by Herbert in his poems of definition" (2) in some stanzas of Southwell's longish poem Saint Peters Complaint, namely stanzas 5, 12, 35, 50, 87, 107-110, 121, 123, 126; also the last stanza of Lewd love is losse and the fourth stanza of What joy to live? He further asserts the frequency of this figure in Elizabethan poetry by reference to poem 118 of the miscellany The Paradyse of daynty devises, to poem 18 of Watson's Hekatompathia, and to a poem by Deloney from Byrd's collection of 1588, printed in English Madrigal Verse. (3)

Brian Vickers has pointed out to me two examples from the late seventeenth century, which shall be quoted in extenso to show what systrophe technically is about:

Here lies a piece of Christ; a star in dust;
A vein of gold; a china dish that must
Be used in heaven, when God shall feast the just.

(Robert Wild. An Epitaph for a godly man's tomb) (4)

'Tis Pia Mater in Discolour'd Weeds:
A Checker'd Plat-form of Phantastic Deeds:
The Brain-Filme wrought into a Dismall Shroud:
The Sun o'th'Little World in a thick Cloud:
Swift Thought turn'd Fairy: Wild wit gone astray:

(1) E.B. Greenwood. "George Herbert's Sonnet Prayer: A Stylistic Study", in Essays in Criticism. XV (1965), pp. 27-45.

(2) Louis L. Martz. The Poetry of Meditation. New Haven 1971 (1962), p. 195

(3) ed. Fellowes, Pt. I, p. 43

(4) Robert Wild (1609-1678), from Iter Boreale, 1668.

A Fancy, that i'th'Dark hath lost its Way.

(Edmund Elys. Melancholy) (5)

My own reading experience provided me with two passages from Hamlet, II.ii.295-300, and III.i.150-154; from Othello, II.i.109-112; from Henry V, IV.i.44-46. The desultory reading of more recent texts provided examples from Alfred de Musset, Lorenzaccio, I.iv. Rimbaud turns a little systrophe on Baudelaire whom he celebrates (and this is a nice point in the present context of the rhetoric of the un-nameable) as the poet of the unseen and the unheard.

Mais inspecter l'invisible et entendre l'inouï étant autre chose que reprendre l'esprit des choses mortes. Baudelaire est le premier voyant, roi des poètes, un vrai Dieu. (6)

Systrophic passages from Rilke's second Duino Elegy and Rudolf Borchardt's Der Durant do not so much prove the viability of this particular rhetorical figure as rather testify to its psychological foundation which allows it to be recreated and re-felt in every age and literary period. -

In the first half of the seventeenth century systrophe seems to have been especially vigorous and dynamic, as can be shown by examples from some of Herbert's German contemporaries. - The Jesuit Jakob Balde (1603-1668) employs it in a Latin hymn to Mary, Daniel von Czepko (1605-1660) wittily applies it to a glove, while Christian von Hofmannswaldau (1617-1679) in Die Welt, Andreas Gryphius (1616-1664) in Menschliches Elend, An die Sterne, and Angelus Silesius (1624-1677) in Der unerkannte Gott, and Du allerschönstes Bild clearly use systrophe to cognitive ends.

(5) Edmund Elys (1635, alive in 1707), from Dia Poemata, (1655)

(6) in his letter to Paul Demyen, 15 May 1871.

II. SYSTROPHE AND THE RHETORICIANS

I am fully aware of the fact that in my pursuit of systrophe I follow a hermeneutical circle. The movement is a continual shuttling back and forth from Peacham's handbook definition of the figure to practical instances of systrophe, and vice versa, i.e. from working systrophe back to the manual terminology. Peacham's notion of systrophe (and only his) allows me to identify the figure at work in poetic passages, which in turn provide a feed-back for the theoretical foundations of the Garden of Eloquence. Otherwise the rhetorical sources of systrophe can only be called precarious.

Taking off from an actual observation, I first was struck by a peculiarly patterned arrangement of argument comparatively frequent in the poetry of Herbert and his followers. Peacham's definition of conglobatio precisely describes the noted feature and backs it up with corresponding examples:

Conglobatio, of defynitions, is when we bring in many diffinityons of one thing, yet not such defynitions as doe declare the pith of the matter, but others of another kynde all heaped together, which doe amplifie most pleasauntly, such as be these defynitions of Cicero, in his second booke of an Oratoure, by which he doth amplifie the dignity of an Hystory: an Hystorye, sayeth he, is a Testimony of tymes, a light of verity, the maynteynance of memory, the Scholemaystrisse of lyfe, the messenger of antiquitye, Another Man is an example of imbecillity, the spoyle of tyme, an Image of unconstancye, a Captive of calamitye, a prysoner of paynes, a Servaunt to covetousnesse, fynally, a foode for Wormes: Ryches are the rootes of sinne, the Nurces of Iniquity, guydes to pryde and presumption, mayntayners of iniuries: pleasures are enemyes of chastity, leaders to poverty, the daughters of dishonesty, baytes of extreame misery. (1st Ed. 1577)

The Garden of Eloquence is, in fact, the only manual where the term systrophe/conglobatio is applied to a strict chain of asyndetically juxtaposed metaphors that translate a given term of reference without a predicative verb. Systrophe is a figure with no definitive terminological tradition that I have been able to trace, though the genealogy of the term is comparatively easy to draw. Systrophe/conglobatio is not one of the general and basic figures of speech or thought, therefore it is listed only intermittently. This is also one reason why - where it appears - there is no general agreement as to the exact meaning of the term. That is to say, systrophe is in no way consistently defined.

Just for the sake of completion I will briefly sketch systrophe's rhetorical family-tree, although (and I cannot help emphasizing this fact) for the following

discussion of systrophe in metaphysical poetry I rely entirely on Peacham's conclusive definition of the term, as he gives it in the second edition of his Garden of Eloquence (1593):

Systrophe of some called Conglobatio, of other convolutio, and it is when the Orator bringeth in many definitions of one thing, yet not such definitions as do declare the substance of a thing by the general kind, and the difference, which the art of reason doth prescribe, but others of another kind all heaped together: (his illustrations for this are the same as in the 1st edition.)

In concordance with the general tendency of his revision of the 1577-version, Peacham changes the heading of the figure into its original Greek form systrophe, whereafter - in the text - he identifies the term with its Latin equivalents convolutio and conglobatio (which was his only term in the first edition). Moreover, he has some remarks on "The use of this figure", and adds a "Caution":

This figure is an ornament of singular grace and eloquence, serving most aptly and elegantly to commend vertues and dis-praise vices. - It is not good to affect this ornament too much, nor to use it too oft, nor in using it to make too many definitions of one thing.

William G. Crane, in his introduction to the Scholar Press's facsimile reproduction of the second edition of Peacham's work, traces back the origins of a great many figures and terms, but fails or neglects to do so for systrophe. Among Peacham's chief predecessors, whom Crane names as his sources, only Trapen-zuntius includes a reference to what he calls convolutio in the fifth book of his Rhetoricorum libri quinque (1523), in the section on the stylistic feature circumductio:

Convolutio est oratio ita verbis composita, ut tota in se contineri videatur, neque eius pars aliqua comprehendere possit, nisi totam absolveris, haec et rotundam et pulchram facit orationem. Circumducit vero quatenus omnia inter se membra adeo complicantur, ut nullum sine aliis intellegi possit, et in unius membri corpus convenire videantur.

The example cited to illustrate this figure does not, however, correspond at all with what we have come to think of as systrophe:

Cicero in epistola ad Curionem. Te rogo, ut memineris quantae-cunque tibi accessiones fient, et fortunae, et dignitatis, eas te non potuisse consequi, nisi meis puer olim fidelissimus atque amantissimus consiliis paruisses. Item si hoc statueris, quarum laudum gloriam adamaris, quibus artibus hae laudes comparantur, in his esse elaborandum.

Except for the terminological similarity there does not seem a strong dependence from Peacham on Trebizond. On the other hand the passage from Trapezuntius closely resembles the convolutio as described in Robert de Basevorn's medieval Forma Praedicandi (1322), where it is listed as the thirteenth of the twenty-two "ornaments employed in the most carefully contrived sermons":

The thirteenth ornament is called Convolutio, in which any part of a statement corresponds to every part of every other statement. It is called Convolutio because there is not the determined application of one part to one part, but of all parts to all parts. One cannot easily use this ornament. (7)

As Professor Monfasani has pointed out to me (in a personal letter), Hermogenes of Tharsos was apparently the first to speak of to Kata systrophen schema in a more or less definite stylistic context:

καὶ μὴν καὶ τὸ κατὰ συστροφὴν λεγόμενον σχῆμα
σφόδρα ἐμπερίβολον, οἷον "εἰ γὰς ὅθ' ἤκομεν
Εὐβοεῦσι βεβοηθηκότες" καὶ τὰ ἐξῆς, καὶ πάλιν
"ὁ γὰς οἷς ἂν ἐγὼ ληφθεῖην, ταῦτα πρᾶπτων"
καὶ τὰ ἐξῆς.

In an English approximation:

And also the scheme that we call systrophe is completely heaped/ thrown together, as for instance "for if then when we succoured the people of Euboea ..." etc., and likewise "for he who prepares the things with which I shall be tied up ..." etc. (8)

However, systrophe refers here to a vague stylistic concept of terseness, density, and compression, and has nothing in common with the strict rhetorical figure, which - according to and after Peacham - we have come to call by this name.

After so much, or so little, evidence I am very much inclined to give Peacham the honour in the rhetorical parentage of systrophe (convolutio/conglobatio). He seems to have taken and been inspired by the unspecific stylistic term systrophe/convolutio as he found it in Hermogenes and Trapezuntius, respectively, and filled

(7) Quoted from J.J. Murphy. Rhetoric in the Middle Ages. University of California Press, 1974, p. 354

(8) For this I am obliged to my teacher-colleague Dr. Fritz Graf, who furthered my understanding of this passage and pointed out the incompleteness of Hermogenes' examples. He also traced back the second instance to Demosthenes' Philipp. 3, 17, where the sentence finishes as "he ... is at war with me, even if he does not know it or does not seem to be."

it with definite rhetorical contents. He adapted a stylistic term to an highly specialized and differentiated figure of speech that was as yet without a name (as it had been covered variously by *translatio*, *expolitio*, *periphrasis*, *synonymia* et al.) (9)

The remaining branches of *systrophe*'s family-tree are quickly drawn Richard A. Lanham, the only "modern" Anglo-American rhetorician to list the figure at all, avowedly depends on Peacham, from whom he also takes the examples. Under the heading Systrophe = Conglobatio he writes: (10)

Heaping up of descriptions of a thing without defining it.

On the other hand, the French type of conglobation follows a different line of tradition. Pierre Fontanier, for example, by explicitly relating conglobation with énumération and accumulation, clearly goes back to Trapezuntius'/Hermogenes' stylistic notion of convolutio/circumductio:

La Conglobation, que l'on appelle encore Énumération, Accumulation, est une figure par laquelle, au lieu d'un trait simple et unique sur le même sujet, on en réunit, sous un seul point de vue, un plus ou moins grand nombre, d'où résulte un tableau plus ou moins riche, plus ou moins étendu.

Massillon, dans son Sermon sur la vérité d'un avenir:

"L'impie est à plaindre, s'il faut que l'Evangile soit une fable; la foi de tous les siècles, une crédulité; le sentiment de tous les hommes, une erreur populaire; les premiers principes de la nature et de la raison, des préjugés de l'enfance; le sang de tant de martyrs que l'espérance de l'avenir soutenait dans les tourments, un jeu concerté pour tromper les hommes; la conversion de l'univers, une entreprise humaine; l'accomplissement des prophéties, un coup du hasard; en un mot, s'il faut que tout ce qu'il y a de mieux établi dans l'univers se trouve faux, afin qu'il ne soit éternellement malheureux." (11)

(9) Crane has noted such an adaptation and assimilation in other figures; cf. pp. 14 & 20 of his introduction to the *Scholars Facsimiles & Reprints of The Garden of Eloquence* (1593), New York 1977.

(10) R.A. Lanham. A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms. Univ. of Calif. Press 1963

(11) Pierre Fontanier. Les Figures du discours. Repr. Paris 1968; p. 363. - Similarly Henri Morier. Dictionnaire de Poétique et de Rhétorique. Paris 1961: "Conglobation. Accumulation de preuves. La conglobation combat la partie adverse par une sorte de feu roulant d'arguments ... Pascal, en employant une surabondance de force à convaincre les jésuites de mauvaise foi, n'a fait de ses Provinciales qu'une immense conglobation."

Although similar to the eye (e.g. parison, asyndeton) the French conglobation differs significantly from the English systrophe. The French figure belongs to the large group of congeries/accumulatio, where many different things are heaped together. The English term is part of the syntagm periphrasis/synonymia, "by which one thing is expressed in many different words or phrases of the same meaning." (Susenbrotus). Peacham deserves the praise for having detected and evolved the potentialities of a term he found in Hermogenes, and for giving stringency and concentration to a stylistic concept which he saw in Trapezuntius. (12)

- (12) There remains the question about the origin of the term conglobatio that suddenly appears in 1577 in Peacham's first Garden of Eloquence without any traceable precedents; since Trapezuntius had rendered the Hermogean systrophe as convolutio.

CURRICULUM VITAE

I was born in 1949 in Horgen near Zürich. After six years of primary school I attended the Kantonales Gymnasium Freudenberg, Zürich, where I received a classical education (Latin, Greek). Following my graduation in the summer of 1968, I took up my studies at the University of Zürich where I read English and German literature and linguistics. In 1970/71 I was an assistant teacher of German at Woodhouse Grammar School and Christ's College, both in Finchley, North London. In 1974/75 a grant enabled me to continue my studies at the University of Aberdeen. At King's College, where the late Sir Henry Grierson initiated the rediscovery of the Metaphysical Poets at the beginning of the century, I started work on the present doctoral dissertation. This was completed in 1978 at the University of Zürich under the supervision of Professor Brian Vickers. I sat for my exams the summer of the same year. At present, I am teaching English in Zürich.

